



MINUTES OF THE APRIL 8, 2015 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING OF THE RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

The Regular Meeting of the Resource Conservation District (RCD) of Santa Cruz County Board of Directors was called to order at **6:35 PM, April 8, 2015** at the District Office, 820 Bay Avenue, Suite 136, Capitola, CA 95010.

Directors Present:	Gordon Claassen Robert Ketley Jim McKenna, President John Ricker Roberta Smith
Directors Absent:	Howard Liebenberg Mike Manfre, Vice President
RCD Staff Present:	Chris Coburn, Executive Director Sharon Corkrean, Director of Finance Tangi Chapman, Recorder
NRCS Staff Present:	Rich Casale, District Conservationist
Member of the public:	Stuart Davis

WELCOME - INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting opened at 6:35PM. Jim McKenna chaired the meeting. Introductions were made.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

There were no oral communications.

REPORT

NRCS Report

Rich Casale circulated his NRCS Activity Summary for March. Rich told the Board that he attended a webinar held by the NRCS Ethics Officer. In the webinar the Ethics Officer reviewed the strict guidelines for what the NRCS is allowed to write when submitting a Letter of Support for a project or grant. The federal legislation clearly states that the NRCS cannot endorse any service or enterprise or give any qualified verbiage to support any project. Therefore, what can be said is strict adherence to the facts, while not supporting or endorsing any values or opinions. Rich's initial inquiry came about after a letter of support from him was requested by the RCD staff.

Carlos Suarez, NRCS State Conservationist, will be visiting the area on April 22, 2015 to tour local projects with young NRCS leaders from around the state. In addition, Kay Joy-Barge, NRCS Area Conservationist, will be attending the tour along with representatives of other NRCS offices from around the state. Rich gave an outline of projects they will tour.

The Capitola office has been selected to pilot the new Resource Stewards Tools to use in conservation planning. The tools can be used to evaluate wildlife, grazing and nitrate levels, among other things. Rich said his office will be critiquing the tools to fine tune recommendations and science surrounding the conservation planning process.

Further, on May 8 the Capitola office has been selected to hold a focus group on the NRCS conservation planning process to improve conservation planning services. Rich will send out more details and encourages a board member to attend. NRCS will also hold a Media tour on May 8 regarding the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. Both Rich and Chris Coburn recognize that there are many commitments for tours and spotlight events recently taking place in Santa Cruz, and expressed the need to be selective of the events to attend and/or sponsor, particularly considering the demands they place on NRCS and RCD staff as well as our partners.

Rich noted that he spoke at a drought solutions conference in Davis on the "Forgotten Practices" related to drought. Rich has received several requests and/or inquiries regarding the next Blue Circle. Jim McKenna suggested writing down all the commitments that have been asked of NRCS to guide the efforts to determine the priorities and how to fund them.

MINUTES

The Board reviewed the March 11, 2015 meeting minutes. Gordon Claassen moved approval of the March 11, 2015 minutes with the date corrected to read March 11, 2015 in the first paragraph. Robert Ketley seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion. The motion carried.

BUDGET & FINANCE

FY 2014-2015 Expenditures – The March 2015 expenditures were reviewed by the Board. The Board discussed the "dashboard" and any future updates to add clarity of information. Sharon Corkrean highlighted that the Upper Pajaro Irrigation and Nutrient Management grant "wrapped up" in March; Sharon noted that we have already received the final payment. Chris reported that there has been traction at state level in getting reimbursement done faster. Roberta Smith moved approval of the expenditures as presented. Gordon Claassen seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion. The motion carried.

Sharon updated the Board regarding the cost allocation plan. She explained that this document backs up the numbers we use for our hourly reimbursable rates and has a component that is OMB (Office of Management and Budget) compliant. Sharon and Arianne Rettinger will be meeting with the consultant one last time to be trained on the use of the software. The Coastal Conservancy requested this document last year and many of the new grants are requesting it as well. This plan is good for one year and is to be updated annually. As a side note, Robert Ketley asked about the 319 federal grant reimbursements to individual's saying that he was under the impression that rates cannot exceed \$75/hour, and questioned how the Cost Allocation Plan would fit with this. Sharon will follow up with Robert.

ACTION ITEMS

LAFCO Elections – The Board discussed the candidates for the runoff election. John Ricker moved to vote for Tomas La Hue as the Special District representative on the LAFCO Board. Roberta Smith seconded the motion. The Board discussed the candidates further. The vote was called with Jim McKenna, Gordon Claassen, Roberta Smith, and John Ricker in favor; Robert Ketley against. The motion carried.

Procurement Policy – The Board discussed the procurement policy as presented by Sharon. Jim McKenna suggested adding an item that would refer to the employee handbook for the policy on employee purchases of incidental items. John Ricker moved approval of the policy with the addition outlined above. Gordon Claassen seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion. The motion carried.

Staff Reports

Chris Coburn updated the Board on staff activities. He reported that Benjamin Cook has been hired as a contract employee to help with Alicia Moss's and Stacie Ruffoni's tasks. Ben will help move construction projects through this summer, including assisting with finalizing designs, obtaining permits and conducting the bid and contracting processes.

Recruitment for the Agricultural Technician position will begin this Friday; the position is being supported by three grants and will be tasked with carrying out irrigation audits and conservation planning.

Chris noted that many of the open space organizations have been talking about changing course from a business model focused on acquiring land to a model that also recognizes the need for land stewardship. Chris and Kellyx Nelson, Executive Director of the San Mateo RCD, have been working with these organizations to remind them that RCDs were created by the legislature to conduct stewardship, have been doing this work for decades, and would be the logical partner in these activities. Chris and Kellyx worked to make this case as part of a planning process, entitled Stewardship 5.0, which is being led by the Sempervirens Fund and recently held a two day retreat with a number of conservation organizations including the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), Mid-Peninsula Open Space District, and the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, among others. He will update the Board after a subsequent retreat scheduled for early June. Roberta suggested Chris talk with Nadia Hamey regarding this process and players as she has much experience in this area. Jim suggested putting together a one page "talking sheet" with our partners that outlines our skills and knowledge. Chris welcomed the suggestion.

Further, Chris informed the Board of a grant the RCD was awarded to work with The Nature Conservancy in the Upper Pajaro. The grant is to work on a "greenprint" for stewardship in the watershed and will point to the role of RCDs in fulfilling that mission. Gordon Claassen shared that he likes the use of the word "stewardship" as opposed to "restoration" as it suggests that the process is ongoing. Chris shared that the RCD has a unique role as a non-regulatory public agency.

Highlights of staff activities included, a Conservation Incentives Grant to promote market based incentives for Managed Aquifer Recharge for \$400,000. Additionally, staff have been working on the AB 32 Greenhouse Gas Grant; this is a community driven voluntary grant that promote the development of a community-led effort to develop a plan for voluntary crop rotation that will help benefit soil health, carbon sequestration and water overdraft; John Ricker is the lead on this grant. The District has received a grant from the California Department of Food and Agriculture to look at soil health, carbon sequestration and conservation planning. He pointed out that staff are piecing together many grants and leveraging them to complement each other. The District is working with the County of Santa Cruz and the State Department of California Fish and Wildlife to utilize settlement funds to implement a habitat improvement project on San Vicente Creek. Chris will be attending the Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday to support the County's adoption of the Working Lands Resolution.

A milestone was reached with the Wireless Irrigation Network; there is now 100% coverage of the south county with WIN Towers. The Board suggested it would be helpful to document the use of the sensors.

John Ricker and Chris will attend a symposium on the "State of the San Lorenzo River" on April 11 at the Civic Auditorium in Santa Cruz. The intent of the symposium is to bring scientists together to discuss what is going on in the San Lorenzo River. John Ricker will be speaking in the afternoon during a session that Chris will moderate.

Chris said that the staff and the Board will need to continue discussion regarding the consolidation of the two RCD office suites.

Additionally, Chris noted that Emily Paddock and Sacha Lozano presented on Community Water Dialogue efforts at the California Climate & Agriculture Network conference in Davis and their talk was well received. Chris pointed out that staff have completed a draft of the LAFCO service review and are awaiting a response from LAFCO. California Department of Finance will be conducting the audit of the Department of Water Resources Pajaro Integrated Regional Water Management grant; the auditors will visit the District office in late April.

Director Reports

Gordon Claassen will be attending a Central Coast Range Land Coalition meeting on April 16; he will be assisting with small group facilitation. The meeting will focus on predators and there will be a presentation by the Puma Project.

Robert Ketley testified in Sacramento regarding AB 300. The bill would support research of algal blooms and is sponsored by Luis Alejo and cosigned by Mark Stone with many others signed on. Robert expects a vote on the Bill in October. He also reported that he has an upcoming call to discuss cyano-toxins in Lake Chabot in the East Bay where several dogs have died.

Roberta Smith reported that she attended a Cal Poly Advisory Council meeting last Friday that featured a tour of the Swanton Pacific Range. The tour discussed grazing patterns and how they affect perennial and annual grasses. Roberta said the tour increased her understanding of grazing practices and the roll of grazing to encourage perennial grasses and discourage the annual grasses.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

There were no written communications.

NEXT MEETING

Date/ Agenda Items

The next meeting will be on May 13, 2015. Gordon Claassen moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:15PM. Robert Ketley seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion.

Mike Manfre
Vice President, Board of Directors
(TC:MM)

